

**Testimony of Ginny Kozlowski, President & CEO,  
Greater New Haven Convention & Visitors Bureau, on behalf of the  
Tweed New Haven Airport Authority before the Committee on Appropriations  
February 18, 2009**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony concerning Tweed New Haven Airport. The Bureau is an economic development and marketing organization which markets the City of New Haven and 18 surrounding towns to leisure travelers, conference planners, motor coach tour operators, sporting event organizers and the media.

Accessibility – be it via air, rail or automobile – is critical to a destination’s success and can mean the difference between whether a community grows or stagnates. The presence of Tweed New Haven is a major asset to the tourism industry of Greater New Haven. However, to realize the region’s full potential as a destination, the airport must improve its infrastructure to support an expanded schedule of flights to additional destinations.

Each year the Convention & Visitors Bureau bids on events that can infuse millions of dollars of visitor spending into the local economy. One of the critical decision points of many organizations is the availability of convenient air service. Within the last year we have lost a number of bids to other communities with more commercial flights. One example is the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, Inc., who elected to hold their five day event with a total of almost 1000 room nights in Buffalo on the basis on limited air service into New Haven. This resulted in a loss of an estimated \$1.4 million in visitor spending. In their explanation for not selecting New Haven, they stated:

*We had to make a rather difficult decision about the 2009 convention site. It was difficult because our experience in New Haven was so positive and we wanted very much to be able to place the 2009 convention in your city. However, as you are aware transportation from the airport to the hotel would have been too costly for our members. The majority of our members, who would be traveling from all over the United States as well as international, would most likely have opted to fly into Hartford International Airport. Commuting time and cost would have been an issue and we feel would have been a deterrent for people to attend the convention.*

In addition, our bid for an AAU National Girls’ Basketball Championship for 2010 was denied on the basis of limited air service in the region. This same group had held a national championship in New Haven in 2008 with over 90% of post-event survey respondents indicating they would return to New Haven for a future tournament. Conservative estimates place visitor spending from the 2008 event well over \$600,000 in a slow period for local hotels and restaurants.

With both business and leisure travelers being more cautious in how they spend their travel dollars, our region is ideally situated to take advantage of our prime location between New York and Boston. We simply need to provide adequate air service at our airport.

**Greater New Haven/CONNECTICUT**  
Convention & Visitors Bureau